

VZCZCXRO6520
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHBM #0802 3371326
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 031326Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0124
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 000802

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE EUR/CE FOR ASCHEIBE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OREP](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [RO](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL SKELTON MEETS WITH ROMANIAN MILITARY
LEADERSHIP

REF: STATE 120174

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a 23-25 November 2009 visit to Romania, House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO), ranking member Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA) and four other HASC members met with senior leaders of the Romanian MOD and General Staff, members of the parliamentary Defense Committee and the Romanian President's National Security Advisor, as well as visiting Romanian soldiers wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq. CODEL Skelton thanked Romania for their force contributions in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Western Balkans and expressed Congressional support for deepening U.S.-Romanian Political-Military cooperation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) CODEL Skelton met November 24 with Chief of General Staff Adm Gheorghe Marin, Chief of Land Forces MGen Dan Ghica, Deputy Defense Minister Viorel Oancea and other MOD officials to discuss U.S.-Romanian defense cooperation and especially joint operations in Afghanistan. The CODEL thanked the Romanians for their contributions and sacrifices in Afghanistan and Iraq. The MOD reps expressed their pride in their close relationship with American Armed Forces and emphasized that through this cooperation and joint training Romania was working to modernize its military forces. Gen Ghica told the CODEL that the Romanian Land Forces were eager to continue their contributions in Afghanistan but asked for Congressional help in acquiring the equipment necessary to do the job properly. He focused specifically on heavily armored vehicles such as Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAP) and armored construction equipment for combat engineers. Ghica noted that Romanian troops were patrolling Highway One between Kabul and Kandahar alongside American troops but they did not yet have the same equipment as the American units. He added that Romanian combat engineers have been underutilized due to their lack of armored bulldozers and graders. Finally, the Romanians noted that their Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) capabilities had been seriously degraded by operations in Iraq, where they had essentially worn out all of their existing aircraft. The MOD had already begun to lose experienced pilots and technicians due to a lack of usable UAVs, and they were seeking assistance in purchasing new systems or in allowing Romanian pilots to operate U.S. UAVs in Afghanistan.

¶3. (SBU) The Delegation met separately with four members of the Romanian Parliament Committee on Defense, Public Order and National Security, led by committee chairman, Costica Conacheu and including representatives from each of the three major political parties. The MPs emphasized that, regardless of who won the December 6 presidential runoff, Romania would remain committed to the mission in Afghanistan and the close relationship with the United States. They acknowledged that the political parties disagreed on many topics, but they were united behind the view that a strong relationship with the U.S. was essential to Romanian security. The CODEL and their

Romanian counterparts also shared views on the legislative branch oversight responsibilities, especially in the context of the military. The CODEL advised the Romanians to visit with their troops, to talk with them and to see their equipment so that they would be better educated about the military's needs and procurement priorities.

¶4. (SBU) The CODEL also met with Iulian Fota, National Security Advisor to Romanian President Traian Basescu, who explained that Romanian engagement in Afghanistan had not been an issue in the presidential elections because all the major candidates and parties agreed on the importance of the mission. He also discussed the importance of the Black Sea area for regional stability and global energy security. Fota said that Romania had a key role in promoting and securing regional stability and that it was vital that NATO and the U.S. increase their influence throughout the Black Sea area.

¶5. (SBU) Finally, the Delegation visited the military hospital in Bucharest and met with soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of whom had received medical treatment in the U.S. or at U.S. facilities in Germany. Several soldiers expressed their gratitude for lifesaving treatment, while the CODEL thanked the soldiers and their families for their service. Two soldiers still require follow-up care not available in Romania, and the CODEL promised to explore the possibility of arranging treatment at U.S. facilities. The CODEL asked the Romanian hospital and Embassy Bucharest for specific information on the patients' conditions and treatment requirements. Post is following up directly with CODEL staff and the hospital.

GITENSTEIN